

The Seven Saxon Kings Embroidery Project



Seven Kings of England are traditionally accepted to have been crowned in Kingston upon Thames over a thousand years ago.

The Seven Saxon Kings Embroidery project was set up to honour this legacy through the creation of a series of contemporary life sized yet intricate embroidery panels of the kings, four of which are now complete and available to view in the East end of All Saints Kingston.

Our ambitious project highlights our rich historical significance both regionally and nationally, fostering local identity in Kingston and drawing nationwide audiences to this somewhat less recognised period of our heritage.

For more information and to contribute to this iconic project please visit: www.allsaintskingston.co.uk/heritage/seven-saxon-kings



Representation of how the completed panels will appear once complete

The Completed Kings



Athelstan. Reign 924-940 'the first king of England'. He is shown presiding over a map of Britain. Kingston, where he was crowned on 4 September 925, is marked by a 'noble stone' (the meaning of his name). Tribute and gifts come from Wales, Viking lands and continental Europe. At the top we see his armour and, above that, broken shackles to celebrate his freeing of a slave on his coronation day.

Edmund. Reign 939-946 Giver of the first written laws for the new English state. The Anglo-Saxon text is copied from the earliest surviving manuscript. Notice the subtle layering effect in the embroidery. While hunting near Cheddar one day, the stag and pursuing hounds fell over a cliff into the gorge. but Edmund's horse drew up just in time, which Edmund attributed to the prayers of St Dunstan (bottom right). Notice the beautiful rendering of the stag's fur (top left). The Northumbrian saints, Aidan, Cuthbert and Hilda, relics of whom Edmund brought to Wessex, are seen at the foot.



Edred. Reign 946-955. He had to fight to reassert his authority over Northumbria. On a march north, he set fire to Ripon minster. If you stand at the west end of the church the brilliant red of the flames shines out and draws your eyes to the embroideries. Bishop Dunstan, a constant figure in these reigns (kings often died young, senior clergy often lived long) is seen again.

Eadwig (Edwy). Reign 955-959. A teenager when he succeeded to the throne, he became notorious in church circles 'for leaving his coronation feast to wallow in the embraces of a 'lewd woman'. In fact, he may have contracted a marriage disapproved of by the church. We see the coronation feast, with boar's head, fish and fruit, and Dunstan and the lady rebuffing each other. Edgar, for a time co-ruler and then Edwy's successor, is seen bottom left.



The Awaited Kings



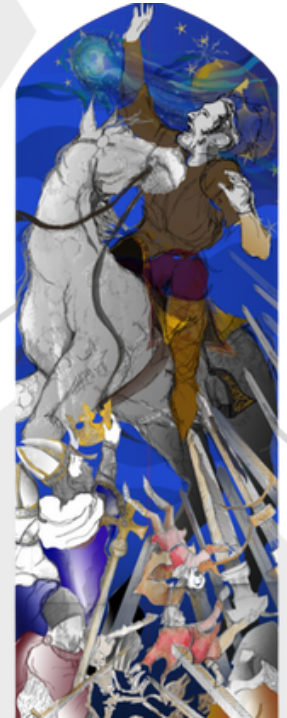
Edward the elder and Aethelflaed. Reign 899-924

As ruler of the West Saxons, or Wessex, Edward conquered, consolidated and ruled areas that had previously been held by Danish invaders, with the instrumental support of his sister Aethelflaed, Lady of the Mercians, paving the way for the complete unification of England during the reign of his son and successor, Athelstan.

Both Edward and Aethelflaed are shown standing over the networks of fortresses they built, swords down to rebuff a series of rebellions from Danish Vikings, Welsh kings and latterly Norse Vikings.

The imagery on the bottom of the banner was inspired by the rebellion and attempt to seize the Kingship at the start of Edward's reign by Aethelwold, a nephew of Alfred the Great and rival Aethling (Prince/King in waiting) with his Viking allies.

Edward the Martyr. Reign 975-978



Edward inherited the crown at just 13 years old and was of disputed legitimacy.

His early reign was marred by tensions in the network of statesmen built up under Edgar; particularly the aristocracy who opposed church and ecclesiastical land reforms. He died too young to have made much impact as a King.

The panel shows Edward falling backwards off his twisting horse onto the swords below as his crown disintegrates into the halo, indicating his later martyrdom. The reins of the horse are not in his control, referring to his alleged murder, plotted either by anti-monastic movement or his stepmother who intended to put her own son (Ethelred the Unready) on the throne.

A large comet, signaling a bad omen, plunges through the sky behind him. Below the factions descend into civil war and in the background, skeletons represent the famine and subsequent civil unrest of his reign..

King Ethelred. Reign 978-1016



Known as 'Ethelred the Unready, but this actually comes from the Old English unræd meaning "ill-advised" rather than the modern word "unready",

Ethelred had one of the longest reigns of any early medieval English monarch, coming to the throne at about the age of 12 and including a period in exile in 1012-14 AD. The panel shows Ethelred looking over a disintegrating kingdom due to ill-advised decisions. A comet plunges past him, recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and a contemporary sign of doom. The King's robe swirls over a barren burning land, yet the ornate ivory cross signifies the great activity and development of Saxon arts, crafts and Christian culture at this time. Vikings

and warships pour in over the waves, their Viking war helmets signifying intent. The rough waves indicate the destruction of the regular Viking raids with Viking mercenaries working for and against Ethelred. Coins swirl into the sea to signify the attempts to pay tribute (gafol) or enlist Viking mercenaries to protect the kingdom.

The Artists and Embroideries Legacy

Conservation

Conservation has been a priority throughout the entire project. Every aspect, from the selection of threads and backing materials to the choice of display, including the use of museum-quality conservation glass and other carefully chosen materials, has been meticulously considered. These decisions have been guided by the expertise of our conservation consultant Janie Lightfoot Textiles and are aimed at ensuring the longevity and preservation of the embroideries for generations to come. By prioritizing conservation at every step, we are confident that the beauty and significance of these artworks will be preserved for centuries, allowing future audiences to appreciate their historical and artistic value.



The Artists

Jacky Puzey: Based in Bristol, Jacky Puzey seamlessly merges artisanal craftsmanship with digital innovation. With a background in Fine Art and a PhD in Fashion, Textiles, and Visual Culture, her expertise brings a contemporary flair to traditional embroidery. www.jackypuzey.com

Beatrice Mayfield: Based in London, Beatrice is a contemporary hand embroiderer. www.beatricemayfield.co.uk

Legacy and Community

The ambition of our Seven Saxon Kings Embroidery project is to bring Kingston's heritage alive, making it visible and accessible to Kingston residents and visitors. We aim to put Kingston on the map as the place to find out about Saxon history and where modern England began offering FREE talks about the embroideries for local groups and schools. To arrange a talk, please contact comms@allsaintskingston.co.uk



We cannot achieve this vision alone, needing your support to ensure that Kingston's Saxon heritage story resonates for generations to come. The 1100 anniversary of King Athelstan's coronation in Kingston occurs in 2025 and we want to complete the project by then as a suitable commemoration. You can help by making a donation of any size, or as a lasting personal legacy may have yours, or a loved ones name entered into our embroidered "book of names" by donating £100, please see the separate leaflet for full details. Every contribution, regardless of size, is deeply appreciated.

